

# Psychosocial Insights and Liberal Humanism in William Shakespeare and Humayun Ahmed: A Comparative Study

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**Abstract:** This study compared the psychological parallels between William Shakespeare and Humayun Ahmed. Despite their varied cultures, traditions, and settings, their writings create a wonderful literary cosmos. Their ability to depict human psychology through characters makes them outstanding psychologists. Their diction and writing styles are different, yet they both have a deep understanding of the human mind and its complexities. They can understand the underlying sentiments of the heart and portray them realistically. Literature is a genuine reflection of life, which is why it's called the mirror of society. These two great authors portray real life in their literary works, eloquently examining the human mind to move readers' emotions and engage them in reality. Their ability to integrate sorrowful and comic elements in a single literary work conveyed the idea that life is a roller coaster of joys and tragedies. Both authors then explore life and death, love and hatred, and fate versus free choice. Due to globalization, these topics are still relevant, making these authors ageless and their writing worldwide. The researchers used explanatory and qualitative methodologies to develop the idea.

**Keywords:** Death, catharsis, professionalism, human endurance, female characters

## INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare is the most renowned English dramatist. Humayun is the modern Bengali writer. Their philosophical concepts help readers understand human nature through his writings. They practiced and valued intellectual freedom and had a profound grasp of people and self-expression. Their works are filled with universal thoughts and ideas essential in all sectors of life. Both authors possessed psychosocial viewpoints, liberal humanism and diversity in their write-ups. Liberal humanism focuses on man and his abilities and it is also a system of shifting perspectives that recognizes the human right to liberty and happiness (Pinto, 2013). Both authors portrayed psychological and social viewpoints of humans with diverse characterization.

Shakespeare is a poet of nature who writes about human nature. His characters are natural; they act, behave, think, and communicate like people. His characters are human. In his plays and poetry, he uses utilitarianism to reveal the issues of human connections, the meaninglessness of man's life, and socio-economic conditions. He reflected on their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. In Hamlet and Macbeth, he solves life's mysteries and rewards. Shakespeare's plays are accurate reflections of life and etiquette. Humayun Ahmed is Bangladesh's best-known author. His contribution to Bengali writing has influenced an entire generation. His popularity extends beyond Bangladesh to Kolkata. Sunil

Gangopadhyay, a contemporary Bengali writer opined that Humayun was Bangladesh's most famous writer and more popular than Sarat (Mahmud, 2020). Popularity, unique work styles, great narrative techniques, and engaging plot constructs made him the Shakespeare of Bangladesh. Humayun Ahmed wrote two hundred books. Bari (2012) adorned Humayun Ahmed as the Shakespeare of Bangladesh. Indeed, Humayun Ahmed can be likened to Shakespeare from a Bangladeshi perspective based on his works, achievements, writing aims, and critical reviews. Shakespeare was much criticized. His compositions lack depth and vocabulary, say critics. This happens because he lacks his contemporaries' intellectual knowledge as Mahmud (2020) thought his compositions lack depth compared to Shawkat Ali, Hasan Azizul Haque, and others. So, Humayun Ahmed suffered from the same problem in his literary context. His storytelling was criticized.

However, this study compares these two authors psychoanalytically in case of characters, themes, motifs, tone, and social aspects represented in their writings.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Freud said the human mind has three elements that shape personality (Barry, 2010). They're called id, ego, and superego. Id traits are bloodshed, adultery, incest, usurpation, betrayal, witchcraft, and violence. The character's id tempts him to plan terrible behavior. Darkness creates the play's evil environment. *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are dark. This opacity suggests human psychology. These plays emphasize feeling, thinking, and planning over action. They mix truth and lies. Darkness links characters' self-awareness. In these plays, darkness symbolizes struggle, movement, and terrible ideas. Shakespeare's ideas and subjects are more varied than others. Shakespeare's emphasis in psychological conflict symbolizes the Renaissance's individualism. Wells (2004) says Shakespeare's concerns reflect his humanist roots.

Humayun Ahmed is the most-read Bangla author (Murshid, 2012). Hossain (1996, p. 279) mentioned speaking for humanity is the essential prerequisite of his work; he writes about his period and area, but his ultimate concern is universal (Also cited in Mondol, 2012).

Anisuzzaman (2012) appreciates him for his distinctive storytelling.

"He's accurately represented the metropolitan middle class," he says. (p.13)

Chowdhury (2015) mentioned, "His work often depicted little moments in the lives of middle-class Bangladeshi families. Being a victim of misfortune in our society can be terrible. Humayun's usual tongue-in-cheek moments are sprinkled throughout."

He employed diction unlike anyone else in Bangla literature history, and his language grabbed people's emotions and inspired others to write plainly for them. Zaman (2012) focuses on Humayun's writing setting. Issues came up and absorbed everyone in a dysfunctional society. Every step has helped them experience life. "Humayun Ahmed's creations were done against the backdrop of all-consuming depression, unemployment, absence of democracy, deprivation, the emergence of autocrats and their oppressions," he says (Zaman, 2012, p. 197). Humayun's dedication to providing joy to the broken. People can immediately detect problems and catastrophes. Saha (2012) says, "He has fulfilled the hunger of individuals who see so much cruelty and need happiness and joy."

Some say his stories are humanitarian. Rahman (2012) tells the writer's talent for capturing humanity is unmatched. She feels Humayun Ahmed is brilliant and forceful. Humanitarian ideas and expressive styles." 234 Some writers have emphasized the author's positive qualities.

Haq (2012) sees truth, purity, and beauty in Humayun Ahmed's words (2012). These three lights lighted his stories, novels, travelogues, memoirs, and lighter writings. His readers prefer simplicity to brilliance."

Hoque (2012) thinks he is a better writer than fans and reviewers think. Humayun Ahmed is a revolutionary who broke away from the previous approach to the country's socio-political and cultural concerns and presented them in diverse ways that people are sometimes bewildered and fail to appreciate his importance. He suggests a deeper examination of the author to uncover more

consequences. This research could provide a new perspective on Humayun Ahmed's short stories using positive psychology.

For decades, Humayun Ahmed has been Bangladesh's dream maker, providing joy to those in need. Scholars and critics have commented on his texts. Many consider him a writer who cares about people's happiness. Humayun Ahmed has produced people's dreams worth 7.5 to 16 crore and influenced our thinking, tastes, and writing (Hoque, 2012). He was a true Bengali who understood our complex mentality. He wasn't like other writers and thinkers. He became a democratic institution in a multifaceted society, valued by all.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted through content analysis and descriptive-comparative method. The researchers explored the textual analysis, critics' analysis and newfangled information through the objectives, experiments, comparisons, reasoning and systematic analysis. The study used the descriptive approach utilizing qualitative techniques such as thematic analysis of existing information in the related field. The initial sources were the close reading of the texts *Srabon Megher Din* (1994) and *Amar Ache Jol* (1985) by Humayun Ahmed and *Hamlet* (1603) and *Macbeth* (1623) written by William Shakespeare and watching movies and dramas based on these fictions. The secondary sources were the study materials from the different literature articles, online newspapers, thesis papers, critical journals from different libraries, research papers from the print and e-journals and web link access to gather specialized information on both the writers to compose the thesis paper more credibly.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Psychosocial Aspects in Monologues and Soliloquies

The works of Shakespeare are filled with monologues and soliloquies. To better comprehend a character, these two figures of speech are employed. But Shakespeare's use of these demonstrates his skill. It might be monotonous when readers receive information from a narrator or another character. The author employs monologue and soliloquy and allows the reader to learn about a character's thoughts, emotions, and motivations through the character's own words to increase its credibility. Shakespeare frequently employs these strategies in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Lives but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing."

In *Macbeth's* final soliloquy, Shakespeare reveals the eternal battle of the human mind regarding the significance of life. Here, these lines reflect the ongoing struggle of the human intellect. After Lady Macbeth's death, Hamlet laments his useless existence. He laments the reality that although life is full of events and action, it is ultimately brief, ridiculous, and meaningless. People believe their measures are necessary, yet finally, they have no significance. He compares human life to the fleeting duration of a flame. Similar to a fleeting shadow cast by a moving figure.

Similar to Shakespeare, Humayun Ahmed demonstrates his skill of soliloquies. While portraying Kusum as a multifaceted figure, he eloquently defines the character and her inner depth through the use of soliloquy. She speaks to herself the majority of the time, making it easy to analyze her character precisely. To cite an example, “কুসুমের চোখ আবার ভিজে আসছে। যা করতে চায়না সেই কাজ টাই সব সময় সে কেনো করে? সব সময় সে ঠিক করে রাখে, পরেরবার মতি ভাইয়ের সঙ্গে যখন দেখা হবে, তখন খুব ভালো ব্যবহার করবে। এত ভালো যে মতি ভাইকে চিন্তায় পরে যেতে হয়।

কিন্তু কখনো তা করা হয় না।” Through this soliloquy, it is apparent that Kusum adores Mati. But she sacred to confess it. Whenever she attempts to impress him, she ends up doing the contrary.

### Theme of Mysticism

Mysteriousness is another characteristic shared by both authors. Similar magical themes are present in their writing. To create a mystical environment in the reader's mind, they frequently imbue their characters with mysticism. Indeed, both Hamlet and Kusum can be regarded as mystic symbols. These two characters inhabit a habitat unknown to the rest of the world. The reader's understanding of what is occurring in their thinking remains vague. They are so immersed in their thoughts that locating them would be nearly impossible. Perhaps that is why Humayun Ahmed says in *Srabon Megher Din*, “জগৎটার মইধোই খালি রহস্য” These two authors have a similar perspective; they both believe that the human mind is unusual. No one has ever imagined what the heart could store. A face cannot reveal what lies within the heart. For this reason, they left certain characters a mystery. They left it up to the readers to formulate their thoughts. That is why Shakespeare says,

“There is no art to find mind's construction in the face” William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*.

Humayun Ahmed also describes the same idea differently,

“ভাব দেখে কিছু বুঝা যায়না কুমুম,  
মানুষের অন্তরের ভাব বড়ই জটিল”  
হুমায়ুন আহমেদ, শ্রাবণ মেঘের দিন

### Mastery in Using Lyric

Lyric is another characteristic shared by these authors. As Humayun Ahmed does, Shakespeare uses lyrics to portray the exact time or the deep feelings of the character. This demonstrates their passion for music and their characterization and grasp of human nature.

The first monologue, which can be interpreted as a poem, expresses Hamlet's unending turmoil and indecisiveness.

“To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache,”

When Humayun Ahmed uses the lyric,

“তুই যদি আমার হইতি  
আমি হইতাম তোর।  
কোলেতে বসাইয়া তোরে করিতাম আদর।”

Through it, Kusum's emotions are communicated. Since Mati is a vocalist, she performs numerous songs. But Kusum wants to hear this music exclusively. This reveals Kusum's suppressed inner emotions. This particular lyric conveys a variety of feelings and ideas as it is also employed in the novel's conclusion. When Kusum dies, Mati believes she hears a distant voice singing the song. The song says that Kusum has abandoned an unfinished love.

### Fate vs. Freewill

Another characteristic element of the tragedies of William Shakespeare and Humayun Ahmed is the contrast between fate and free will. There is perpetual antagonism between these two authors. Tragic characters always have tragic flaws, which is true. However, it does not apply to everyone. Whether it is in our control to determine our destinies or not, people are observed. Fate is an unavoidable occurrence that is beyond our control.

On the other hand, free will is a phenomenon when we use it to do something or refrain from doing something. Fate plays a more significant part in life than free will. One can alter their fate, though, through their actions.

Hamlet's indecisiveness prevented him from deciding whether he should murder his uncle. If he had murdered him, he could avoid this awful outcome.

The fatal weakness of Macbeth is his excessive ambition. He was well-known for his work and held a respectable position. However, his desire for the throne drives him to murder the king, which has thus far led to his downfall.

Kusum was a tardy individual. She may have confessed her love to Mati sooner, and then something might have transpired. When her parents inquired about her opinion regarding her marriage, she had the option to decline. Instead, she agreed to their plan, and then she declared her love for Mati. Due to the late hour, Mati declined and asked her to marry him.

Dilu was irrational. After learning from her sister, she decided to leave the world that Nishat loves the same boy as she does, Jamil. Although she was a teenager, her behavior was infantile. Thus, this innocent teenage crush terminated her life entirely.

### **Theme of Human Endurance**

William Shakespeare and Humayun Ahmed both illustrate the perseverance and helplessness of humans in their writings. Both Hamlet and Macbeth's protagonists endure great suffering. Despite being of aristocratic birth, they had to take much owing to their fate. Following the death of Hamlet's father, his mother marries his now-king uncle. Later, he discovers that his uncle is a possible murderer who killed her father. Knowing this, he was unable to act because he felt uncertain. His mental health was suffering as a result of this. As a result of his blunder, he lost his one true love, Ophelia.

Macbeth suffers in part due to his fault and because of his wife. He was fully content with his name, reputation, and position. Lady Macbeth urged him to murder King Duncan and ascend to the throne. Lost in her mesmerizing words, he determined to assassinate the monarch. This marked the start of his mental anguish and pains. After that, they both lost their peace of mind. Lady Macbeth also lost her sanity; she committed suicide out of the madness. Then his life lost all significance.

In *Srabon Megher Din*, most characters are engaged in their struggle. Mati is an impoverished villager who cannot even handle his own life, let alone Kusum's. He has a deep appreciation for music and desires to form a band. Due to his poverty, he was unable to fulfill his wish. On the contrary, Kusum loves Mati in secret, but never tells her. Though she gives Mati some hints, she does not outright admit it. Her mental health was unstable after Mati rejected her. Shahana is an intelligent girl who visits her granddad. The village is where she meets Mati upon her arrival. His natural simplicity captivated her. She forgets entirely that her fiancé is waiting for her in the city. When her fiancé arrived in the village, her dream bubble burst. Thus, the love triangle shattered into a thousand pieces.

*Amar Ache Jal* also contains many of the soul's suffering and difficulties. Nishat's early loss of her husband rendered her a widow and a single mother. During his adolescence, she cherished Jamil. Now, her younger sister Dilu loves the same person she once did. Jamil continues to love Nishat and is unaware of Dilu. When Nishat realized that Dilu was falling for Jamil, she approached her and asked her to speak the truth. This shook Dilu's heart; she never expected this to occur. That's why Nishat says, "বৈচে থাকা বড় কষ্ট".

Most of the characters in these tragedies experience psychological trauma and fight their mental war. The effusive manner these two authors describe it makes them unquestionably mind-readers.

### **Theme of Death**

Death is a common feature of tragedies. Human kind's entire existence has been spent in averting death. By hating it, fearing it or trying to win it over, we have tried to defy death. But some have death to be a much part of one's existence as life & have welcomed it instead. In *Hamlet*, Ophelia dies, after that Hamlet dies. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth dies at the end Macbeth dies. In *Srabon Megher Din*, Kusum dies. In *Amar Ache Jal*, Dilu dies. All of the protagonist and leading characters die in these four

tragedies, making them real. Somehow, this death keeps the readers captivated and engaged in the story; thus, it becomes significant. That's why probably Humayun Ahmed says in *Srabon Megher Din* "মরণের মত শান্তি বাচনের মধ্যে নাই"

### Catharsis

Catharsis is one of the distinguishing traits of every successful tragedy. It is seen vividly in the tragedies of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Srabon Megher Din*, and *Amar Ache Jal*. When the protagonists Hamlet, Macbeth, Kusum, and Dilu die, the readers grieve. Catharsis refers to the dramatic depiction of pain and death in a tragedy that evokes compassion and terror in the reader. We have also discovered similar propensity in these four catastrophes.

### CONCLUSION

This study reveals the respective creative genius of William Shakespeare and Humayun Ahmed. It demonstrates how effectively they have utilized their pen to represent the characters and issues everyone may identify. This study aimed to compare these two authors in terms of their themes, tone, and character development. It is now evident that they can both be regarded as mind readers. While portraying a character, the actor arouses potential, gives them room to expand, reveals the concealed sides of a person's psyche, and illustrates how to live a life worth living. They skillfully show the inherent instability of the human mind, offering light on the character's psychological troubles as a psychologist. They acted as psychologists to influence the cognitive processes of others. Due to a lack of sufficient research resources, the data collection for the study posed several difficulties.

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